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ABSTRACT

A realistic and challenging teaching of civics is needed in an age of increased concern of man for his fellow men. Textbooks are inadequate because of their emphasis on conclusions and judgments. Controversial issues must be submitted to critical research and critical thinking in the classroom. To promote understanding the uniqueness of American democracy, the author suggests: do not indoctrinate; give politics a distinguished place in citizenship education; include a study of J. H. St. John de Crivecoller, Martineau, de Tocqueville, and Bryce. Discussion of ideas and values are a legitimate study. Much new thinking and planning are needed to make the obligatory teaching of the constitution worthwhile and effective. It is usually taught as a document without origin, background, or setting; the emphasis is on content, not the evolving constitutional process; it is taught divorced from politics and the political process. (VLW)

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How to Make Citizenship Education More Effective

The Office of the
Superintendent of
Public Instruction
State of Illinois
Ray Page
Superintendent

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HOW TO MAKE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION MORE EFFECTIVE

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FOREWORD

Today, more than ever, young people are taking part in political activities. They are showing an increased interest in world affairs and an unusually large number are registering in social studies classes.

The stage upon which history now unfolds is crowded and noisy. It is crowded with crusades for men's minds. It is filled with groups of men seeking their independence and equality for the first time in the memory of man. It is filled with ambition and a desire, now more than ever, for elbow room--both intellectual and physical. Many social problems have resulted from the relatively rapid shift of populations from a rural to an urban economy and demand an immediate solution.

Unquestionably, ours is an age of heartening increased concern of man for his fellowman. Never before have we been aware of or displayed such sympathy for the underprivileged, diseased, and poverty-stricken people of the world. Efforts to stamp out illiteracy and superstition through worldwide economic development and public education are unparalleled in history. In response to this condition, our young people reach out for knowledge. They are curious about the complex world situation, the troublesome domestic difficulties, and the intricacies of the social, political, and economic world. As interested Americans, we must provide the greatest possible number of opportunities for our youth.

Recently, there has been a widespread concern and effort to reassess instructional programs and practices in the social studies. One of these areas receiving considerable emphasis is civic education. Few persons will challenge the need for greater emphasis on civic responsibility in our schools and communities today and in the years ahead. The great economic, social, and political issues and problems of our times, if they are to be properly and fully understood, must be interpreted by an informed citizenry.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is deeply grateful to Doctor Mark M. Krug who planned and wrote this handbook. We commend him for his willingness to assume this responsible task. We hope this handbook will prove to be a worthwhile contribution to the improvement of citizenship education in our State and Nation.

Ray Page
Superintendent of Public Instruction

INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years, major changes in the American way of life which have resulted from the rapid development of the basic disciplines and the changing relationships among the peoples of the world have increased the need for developing the highest quality of democratic citizenship in all children. Solutions for society's human problems, which range from conservation of natural resources to control of crime and from inefficient government to the maintenance of security, will result from the thinking of educated people. It is the charge of the social studies teacher to provide the atmosphere of learning in which students will realize more fully their responsibilities as members of a democratic society, acquire the information and habits of clear thinking necessary for responsible action, and develop the humanity and insight requisite for achieving a more orderly and peaceful world.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Title III, NDEA, Department are pleased to sponsor this political science handbook. We hope that it will stimulate renewed interest in a critical subject area and will aid the teachers of Illinois in their quest for excellence in education.

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FOR MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF GOVERNMENT

or
(alternate title)

HOW TO MAKE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION MORE EFFECTIVE

by -- Dr. Mark M. Krug
Professor of Education
in History and the
Social Sciences

It would be belaboring the obvious to state that the recent developments on the American university campuses and, in many high schools throughout the Nation, make it imperative to improve and to strengthen citizenship education in the schools. The riots, disorders and the sit-ins, often accompanied by coercion and vandalism, provide clear evidence that a substantial portion of our young people feel distrustful or antagonistic to the adult community, think that the governmental agencies on all levels are seriously flawed, and, most importantly, lack an understanding of and faith in the traditional processes in our democratic system for the redress of grievances.

It is the contention of the author that the root for this apparent lack of faith in our system of government lies in the lack of an in-depth understanding of the unique ways in which the American government has evolved and the ways in which it works. It is obvious that we must search for new ideas and new approaches which would lead to more effective citizenship education in our schools. The reference here is not to specific civics courses, but to a broader context of educating young people in our schools, who will be knowledgeable participants and, yes, proud citizens of the United States of America.

There is a strange paradox in the far-reaching demands made for citizenship education and the reality that one encounters in the civics and social studies classrooms. As a rule, citizenship education is limited to the study of the

Constitution which culminates in a test on the Constitution and to the study of the structure and functions of the United States government. Much can and should be done to bring more life, more drama, more interest and more excitement to citizenship education. Obviously, there can be little of that drama and excitement as long as so many teachers make the civics textbook the cornerstone of their instruction.

Many civic and government textbooks are well written and describe the structure and the legal function of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Federal Government and deal with the state and local government units in a scholarly fashion. Yet, textbooks suffer from a number of grave shortcomings. First, like all textbooks they constitute a body of <u>conclusions</u>, some correct, some partly correct, and a few representing the personal opinions and judgments of the author or authors. It is exactly <u>conclusions</u> and <u>judgments</u> that our students need least, especially on such complex issues as the seniority rule in congress or the growing involvement of the Federal Government in education. By presenting "conclusions", one should not assume that the textbooks take a clear-cut position on some controversial issues. On the contrary, the "conclusions" are more often that not inane and lifeless summaries of two opposing viewpoints on the complex issue in question. It is exactly such a succession of inane summaries that make effective teaching of civics so difficult. By glossing over some of the most important problems facing our body politic, most textbooks take the life out of citizenship instruction.

After reading in the textbooks that "some say that the seniority rule is good because . . . ." and "some say that seniority rule is bad because . . ."

why should any bright youngster feel very stimulated to investigate this complicated and important dilemma for himself? This leads us to another difficulty. Many textbooks fail to present the United States of America as it is -- a powerful democratic country which, using the criterion set down by Alexis do Tocqueville, has proved capable of providing the most good for the most people, but as a democracy which is in constant need of a conscious and determined effort for improvement and perfection and which is challenged to deal successfully with a variety of new problems, new issues, and conflicts that result from the ever-changing conditions of a modern society. Some textbooks and some syllabi, in attempting to avoid giving offense to various interests and levels of authority and legitimate and so-so-legitimate pressure groups, often leave out completely discussion of some controversial issues. What is worse, there is often lacking a clear commitment to the refinement and improvement of our democracy. After reading through a civics textbook, which treats explosive questions like civil rights and prayers in public schools gingerly and superficially, why should a high school student feel puzzled, disturbed, and stimulated to do some hard thinking on these complex issues?

The fact is that our students, in this age of "instant information" through television, are well aware of the racial tensions between whites and blacks, of school segregation, of the calls for "black power," of the existence of slums in our cities and of the growing danger of air, river and lake pollution. These matters cannot be swept under the rug in classroom instruction. They must be dealt with by teachers and students honestly and forthrightly.

It would seem that the <u>occasional</u> study of controversial and relevant issues in the context of a critical study of civics and government would be

enough to stimulate and challenge our growing and restless adolescents and assure effective and well-motivated teaching.

Many social studies teachers are apparently convinced that an honest and critical acknowledgment of some weak spots in our democracy would confuse and undermine devotion and faith in our system of government. Some teachers feel that high school students should not be burdened with these crucial problems which bewilder and confuse the adult society. They have time to find out about the imperfections and difficulties after they leave high school and are more mature and better able to deal with controversial issues. The important thing is that young people learn how our government functions and that it deserves the active concern and participation and support of all our citizens.

This reasoning is based on several doubtful assumptions. First it assumes, erroneously, that the mind of a high school student is a tabula rasa, a clearly wiped board, as far as information, attitudes and values on civic issues are concerned. It assumes that our students are unaware of the racial issue, of restrictive convenants in housing, of the existence of slums, and of the complexities of conducting a successful foreign policy in a complex and explosive world. Anyone who has tought high school or talked to high school students knows how keenly aware they are and how much information and misinformation they have about the Harlem and Watts riots, about occupancy ordinances, about juvenile delinquency, about the occasional corruption scandals in their communities and in Washington and about skid rows and slums. In fact, many of them can speak on these problems from personal experience. Civics textbooks may have "closed areas," but for our students, because of television, the involvement of their

parents and their peer group, there is little that remains unknown and untouched. On the contrary, there is an imperative need to submit controversial issues to a searching, honest, and scholarly scrutiny in the classrooms. If our young people are to gain new understandings, new insights, and gradually adopt intelligent and sophisticated attitudes as involved citizens, their bits and fragments of "knowledge," their beliefs, values, and prejudices must be challenged and subjected to the test of critical research and critical thinking. In this way, effective and interesting learning can take place. In this way, we may prepare our young generation for intelligent decision-making as citizens in a world that abounds in conflict and controversy. By this approach, we may succeed in preparing the young generation to compete effectively in the battle of ideas between democracy and totalitarianism.

The ostrich-like attitude adopted by many civics textbooks is not only a distortion of the real society in which the students live and in which they will have to make their way, but it is also one of the major causes of boredom that reigns supreme in many civics classrooms. "We can scarcely expect to motivate," wrote Professor Norton E. Long, a leading political scientist, "to any lasting and strong desire to effectively participate in the community politics with the milk-and-water moralism of the average civics text, nor is the bland emptiness of a junior chamber of commerce get-out-the-vote campaign such that it inspires a ritual of even ceremonial significance. Political competence can stem from a hard material purpose that schools itself to a realistic study of facts."[1]

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[1]Norton E. Long, "Political Science," in The Social Studies and the Social Sciences, Gordon B. Turner, editor, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. (New York, 1962) p. 97.

It is also relevant to point out that the bland diet which is enforced in citizenship and government instruction contradicts what we know about conditions which are needed for effective teaching. Researchers in the area of the teaching-learning process are agreed that learning takes place when what is in the student's mind is confronted, challenged, and puzzled by new information and new insights. Professor Ralph Tyler writes: "As long as the learner does not recognize that his earlier modes of behavior are inappropriate, he will keep on doing what he has been doing and will not really learn anything new." And Herbert Thelen maintains that "Our schools have the responsibility of helping children live as self-realizing people, not in a vacuum or a hermitage, but in a complex society . . . . They are going to manage others; interpret the world around them; make discoveries; create social, political, and economic alternatives; ferret out facts; and persuade, promote, criticize, analyze, guide, console and teach."[2]

It would seem logical to assume, upon some reflection, that our young people will love America more, not less, when they arrive at the realization that in spite of the difficulties, conflicts, and weaknesses, a free democratic society provides the best opportunity for its citizens to enjoy the benefits of a "Good Life." They will love America more, not less, when they gain the insight that generations past have built America soundly and well, but they have left for them the task of improving and refining our way of life. They should realize that it is in the nature of a democracy to always seek improvements and perfection.

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[2]Ralph Tyler, "Criteria for Curriculum Content and Method," in The High School in a New Era, Francis S. Chase and Harold A. Anderson, editors, University of Chicago Press. (Chicago, 1958)p. 178.

Furthermore, realistic and challenging teaching of civics would prevent our students from becoming disillusioned cynics when they find out from their first college instructor or from some life experience that all is not sweetness and light in our politics and in our society. Whether we like it or not, our ideals and way of life will be challenged in coming years and decades, directly or indirectly, peacefully or violently by representatives of totalitarian regimes who will cite chapter and verse in an attempt to prove that communism or fascism is the "wave of the future." Our young people must be ready to accept the challenge. To do so they must be deeply imbued with and committed to "The American Creed," but they must also be aware of the shadows in our society and of the still unresolved conflicts and problems. They must be prepared to defend intelligently the advantages of our way of life and of our system of government and we, the older generation, must make sure that they can point with pride to progress that is being made. In a word, all of our young people must become convinced that our system does work and that it deals effectively, if often slowly, with its shortcomings.

Our instruction in government and in civics has been woefully inadequate in giving our high school students a clear comprehension of the unique genius of the American government, and in fostering in them a commitment to the basic ideals on which this republic was founded and which still constitute the bedrock of its existence.

How does one make the students understand the uniqueness of American democracy? One of the ways not to do it is to attempt to <u>indoctrinate</u> the students with love of country or to preach the gospel of the superiority of the American system over any other system of government. An appreciation of

the uniqueness (not of the superiority) of our form of government should be the hoped-for result of an intelligent, honest, and vivid instruction in citizenship education. The particular and peculiarly attractive features of the Constitution and of American politics are not easily perceived or articulated. It is that difficulty which has made the attainment of this objective in teaching of civics so difficult. This difficulty, however, does not free us from an obligation to find new ways and new approaches. Let us make three suggestions and then elaborate on them in order. First, we want to suggest a thorough study of four books, available in paperback editions, surprisingly, all written by foreigners. The authors of these books have understood and articulated the most important features of the American government and of American society. They also were superb writers and, therefore, their books or at least excerpts from them are quite intelligible to the average high school students. They should be used in all civics classes as supplementary readings. The second suggestion concerns the study of the United States Constitution which, if it is to be effective, must be completely revamped. Finally, it is suggested that politics, an area almost completely ignored in civics classrooms, must be given a distinguished place in citizenship education.

The four books which deserve to be in the hands of all students may well become the standard references in civic instruction. They are: J. Hector St. John de Crivecouer's Letters from an American Farmer; Harriet Martineau's Society in America; (Edited and abridged by Seymour Martin Lipset) Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America; and James T. Bryce's The American Commonwealth.

Crivecouer's little, but important, volume was first published in London in 1782. The author was a Frenchman, who in 1764 became a naturalized American citizen. He was a farmer in Pine Hill in New York State and his letters contain his experiences on his farm and reports on his travels in New England and in the South. Crivecouer was a lover of nature, a keen observer of life in the colonies and a good writer, but what is of interest for us here is his ability to comprehend the uniqueness of the early American experience. Letter number three, entitled "What is an American?", is an absorbing and insightful attempt to set down the differences between the life of an American and an English or a French farmer. An Englishman, when he first lands in America, Crivecouer writes, beholds a rich land with "far cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges, where a hundred years ago all was wild, woody and uncultivated." But even more important is the special spirit of the people in America. "We are animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself. If he travels through our rural districts, he views not the hostile castle and the haughty mansion, contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin, where cattle and men help to keep each other warm, and dwell in meanness, smoke and indigence . . ."

When Americans in the countryside go to church on Sunday there is an atmosphere of equality. "There is not among them an esquire, saving the unlettered magistrate . . . <u>We have no princes for whom we toil, starve and bleed. We are the most perfect society now existing in the world.</u>"

The traveler from abroad, Crivecouer says, would wish to know the background and ask, "What then is the American, this new man?" He answers:

> "He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater.
>
> Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."

Harriet Martineau, an Englishwoman, a writer and social worker, came to America in 1834 and stayed for two years studying American society. Miss Martineau was a reformer and abolitionist, but she was also a thorough and objective researcher of American politics, society and government. She published the results of her study, Society in America, in 1837. She found Americans remarkably different from their European forebearers. "I regard the American people," she wrote, "as a great embryo poet; now moody, now wild, but bringing out results of absolute good sense, restless and wayward in action, but with deep peace in his heart, exulting that he has caught the true aspect of things past, and at the depth of futurity which lies before him, wherein to create something so magnificent as the world has scarcely begun to dream of. There is the strongest hope of a nation that is capable of being possessed with an idea, and this kind of possession has been the peculiarity of the Americans from their first day of national experience till now."

How remarkable it was for Harriet Martineau, in 1835, to perceive of the essence of the American Dream and to stress a unique feature relating to the origin of this country. She realized that the United States, unlike most, if not all, countries was born of an idea that all men were created equal and all had the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that Americans

possessed by this idea were determined and capable of building a new society, the like of which the world has never seen.

However perceptive Crivecouer and Martineau were, no one understood the workings of the American Constitution, of the government and American society as did the young French aristocrat, Count Alexis de Tocqueville. De Tocqueville, who was an assistant magistrate or a junior judge, was sent in 1831 to America by the French government to study the prisons in this country. He and his traveling companion, M. Gustave de Beaumont, soon became so entranced by the United States that they decided to study much more than the prisons--they were determined to learn all that they could about this remarkable land. Tocqueville and Beaumont came to America on May 11, 1831, and sailed back for France on February 20, 1832. The New York Evening Post carried an item which took notice of their arrival: "Two young magistrates . . . have arrived in New York, sent here by order of the Minister of the Interior, to examine the various prisons in our country, and made a report on their return to France." It is remarkable how much de Tocqueville, who remained faithful to his aristocratic heritage and tradition, learned and appreciated about the United States, a democratic republic.

Upon his return to France, de Tocqueville published, in 1835, a report on his travels entitled, Democracy in America in two volumes. The pervading theme of his book that American democracy works, and that it has been able, in spite of many shortcomings, to assure the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest amount of its citizens. Professor George Wilson Pierson, the foremost American scholar on de Tocqueville, summarized Tocqueville's observations on the uniqueness and the sources of strength of the American people in the following points:

"1. Their origin. Fine starting point, intimate mixture of religion and spirit of liberty.

2. Their activity, commercial and industrial. Even their vices are now helpful to them.

3. Their geographical position. No neighbors.

4. The Material Happiness which they enjoy.

5. The religious spirit which reigns. A Republican and equalitarian religion.

6. The diffusion of useful education.

7. Very pure morals.

8. Their division into small states.

9. The lack of a large capital where everything is centered. (Like Paris and London)

10. Communal and provisional activity, which enables everyone to find employment at home."

De Tocqueville was greatly impressed with the egalitarian character of America. He considered the pervasive spirit of equality "an extraordinary phenomenon." "Men are there," he wrote, "seen on a greater equality in point of fortune and intellect, or, in other words, more equal in their strength, than in any other country in the world . . ."

James Bryce, the author of the thorough and penetrating analysis of the American government, society and politics which he entitled, The American Commonwealth, was an Englishman, who at the age of twenty-four gained renown as a historian. After his appointment as professor at Oxford, Bryce visited America frequently to study its institutions, mores and problems. The American Commonwealth was published in 1888 and it was received with great acclaim in the United States and in England. While not uncritical, the author is sympathetic

and understanding. In 1907, Lord Bryce was appointed British Ambassador to the United States, a post which he filled with distinction for a number of years.

Students in civics classes could benefit greatly from a discussion of this list of basic strengths of American democracy as listed by Bryce. We will cite only the first two:

1. "The first is that of Stability... The Federal Constitution is, to their eyes, an almost sacred thing, an Ark of Covenant, whereon no rash man may lay rash hands. Everywhere in Europe one hears schemes of radical change freely discussed... But in the United States the discussion of political problems busies itself with details and assumes that the main lines must remain as they are forever."

2. "Feeling the law to be its own work, the people are disposed to obey the law...The habit of living under a rigid constitution superior to ordinary statutes - indeed two rigid constitutions, since the State Constitution is a fundamental law within its own sphere no less than is the Federal - intensifies this legality of view ...."

Those engaged in the training of prospective history and social studies teachers know of their hesitancy and even resistance to speak clearly about those objectives in civics education which relate directly to the student's intellectual and emotional stance in relation to the United States. They do not feel uncomfortable when encountering such vague terms as "good citizenship" or "responsible citizenship" but they draw back when told that devotion to "American democracy" and "appreciation of American ideals" is postulated as objectives in citizenship education. The hesitation, if not an outright objection, center on the fear of indoctrination and a grave doubt about the efficacy of "teaching" devotion and appreciation. In addition, many of our brighter prospective teachers react almost instinctively to the shrill and

bombastic propaganda for "true" patriotism in schools conducted by some small but vocal extremist pressure groups.

Making due allowance for this difficulty, it must nevertheless be said that an understanding and then, hopefully, an appreciation of the American Creed and the American Dream are legitimate objectives in the teaching of civics. In fact, the attainment of these objectives is the most important reason for teaching civics in schools. The study and discussion of the particular sets of ideas and values that made America, and which form the core of our basic national character, are a legitimate subject of study in social studies. "That each nation has its own character," wrote Professor Henry Steele Commager," is taken for granted, and it is neither chauvinistic nor provincial to observe that the United States is no exception."

It is clear, or it should be clear, that teachers cannot bring about such a commitment, unless they themselves experience a surge of emotion when they read the Declaration of Independence or the Gettysburg Address. Teachers who neither understand, nor stand in awe in face of the utter devotion to freedom and to the government of law of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, John Marshall and Oliver Wendell Holmes cannot inspire their students with a sense of appreciation for the American Creed. Only such a primary commitment can lead to a fruitful and exciting, even if often disturbing and irritating, critical inquiry into the yet unsolved problems and conflicts which beset our society.

The teaching of the Constitution of the United States is, as we have said, obligatory in most of the states. Much new thinking and planning is needed to make this study worthwhile and effective. One assumes that the state

legislatures, which have passed laws requiring the teaching of the Constitution, did so in the hope that the knowledge about the Constitution would lead to an appreciation and veneration of the basic legal document on which our government rests. This hope is not often realized. In many schools the study of the Constitution becomes a rather boring exercise in memorization of the content of the various sections and articles. The questions, often listed on a mimeographed sheet of paper distributed by the teacher, contain no-nonsense factual questions pertaining to the "enumerated powers of Congress," the qualifications required of the candidates for the Presidency and so on. This instruction is then culminated in an examination, usually administered by the state which, on the whole, requires only recall-information.

No wonder that many students find the study of the Constitution tedious and uninspiring. Several things are radically wrong with the present procedure. First, the Constitution is taught as a document or a historical source without an origin, a background and a setting. Second, the emphasis is on the language, the content of that great document, not on the presentation of a <u>living Constitution</u>, the constantly evolving <u>Constitutional process</u> and on the actual application of the various articles and provisions. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, the Constitution is usually taught completely divorced from politics and from the political process. These three major shortcomings will be discussed, <u>seriatim</u>.

The Constitution has a unique plan in American life and that uniqueness must become clear to our students. Once explained and perceived, it may prove to be a powerful motivation for the effective study of the Constitution. Americans can refer to the Constitution because it is the only constitution

this country has ever had. While the United States is a relatively young country, it nevertheless has, among the major powers, the oldest written Constitution in the world which has remained the chief instrument of government. This is of course true of the totalitarian countries and the newly independent countries, but it is also true of the western democratic states. Great Britain has never had a written constitution, and Germany, Italy and France have had several constitutions in the last century.

Our Constitution written at the end of the 18th Century, in the horse-and-buggy era, when even railroads were still unknown, is still a viable instrument of government in the second half of the 20th Century, an age of jet planes and of atomic energy. The teaching of the Constitution in the classrooms throughout this land should be preceded by the discussion of this truly phenomenal fact. How did the Founding Fathers succeed to draw up in 1787 a body of laws, a blueprint for a functioning government which with but a few changes is fully compatible with the radically changed conditions of our times? The answer to this question must lead the teacher and the students to an inquiry into the composition and the workings of the Constitutional Convention about which Thomas Jefferson, at the time the American Minister in Paris, wrote to John Adams in London, "It really is an assembly of demigods."

Portraits of the leaders of the Convention should be drawn for the students in greater detail. There was no question that General George Washington would be the President of the Convention. There was no one who equalled in prestige and fame the man who was "first in the hearts of his countrymen." His integrity and devotion to duty were exemplary and he was a born leader of men. If anyone could have preserved the dignity of the deliberations during the long and hot

summer of 1787, it was General Washington. He and he alone was aloof enough to contribute to the composition of the differences of views on the basic structure of the Federal Union which were known to exist among the delegates. The people in the former colonies trusted him even more because he made no secret of his longing to return permanently to his serious life as the squire of his plantation at Mount Vernon.

Benjamin Franklin was in May 1787 eighty-one years old, but one could not detect any sign of this advanced age from his sprightly walk, his regular attendance at the sessions and his profound wisdom. "The wisest man in the world," as Franklin was acknowledged to be, used his known wit to smoothe the tempers of the delegates which were sorely tried by interminable disputes and the hot and humid weather of a Philadelphia summer. The first veritable genius produced in the colonies was known and respected all over the world as a writer, a scientist, a printer, a newspaper editor, a philosopher, a civic improvement leader and a diplomat. Franklin used his great reputation to foster a spirit of compromise and accommodation to assure the successful outcome of the Convention.

Alexander Hamilton of New York was at the time of the Grand Convention only thirty years old, but he was well known to his countrymen. His was a uniquely American success story. Born on the island of Nevis in West Indies, historians have still not resolved the legitimacy of his birth. At any rate, Hamilton, as a youth of eighteen, came to America and studied at King's College, now Columbia University. He soon threw himself eagerly into revolutionary activities which culminated in his service in Washington's army. Hamilton was a gallant and brave officer and General Washington made him his private secretary

and confidential aide. After the war, Hamilton married into the rich and aristocratic Schuyler family in New York and served in the Continental Congress.

At the Constitutional Convention, Hamilton represented the aristocratic point of view. The new government, he argued, must be put in the hands of the wealthy and the well-educated because the masses are ignorant, shiftless and cannot be trusted. Arrogantly, he once told the Convention that, "Take mankind in general they are vicious." His fellow delegates remembered the oft-quoted opinion that the people are "a great beast." Speaking to the Convention, Hamilton stated on one occasion:

> "Take mankind as they are, and what are they governed by? Their passions...One great error is that we suppose mankind more honest than they are. Our prevailing passions are ambition and interest... All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said is the voice of God; and, however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing: they seldom judge and determine right. Give, therefore, to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and, as they cannot receive any advantage by change, they therefore will ever maintain good government."

What we know about the Constitutional Convention we owe to James Madison. A contemporary onlooker, who would chance upon the Virginia delegation entering the convention hall, would not have been impressed by the slender, small man, who, as we are told, was always dressed in an immaculately clean and well-cut black coat. But appearances would have been deceiving, because Madison, a young man of thirty-six, was undoubtedly better steeped in the studies of government and constitutions than any of the delegates. For several years before the convening of the Constitutional Assembly he read deeply in Plato, Aristotle, Locke and Rousseau and studied all available constitutions of many lands to

prepare himself for the task ahead. In addition to his scholarship, his complete devotion to his responsibility as a Convention delegate, James Madison was a very influential debater. He was knowledgeable, logical, agreeable and, therefore, persuasive.

It was indeed fortunate for future generations of Americans and for students of government everywhere that Madison, on his own initiative, but with the wholehearted support of Washington and of the delegates, kept a daily journal of the proceedings. Since the convention debates were conducted in complete secrecy (amazingly no information "leaks" have developed!) Madison's notes, or Journal of the Convention, are the only source of information on the Grand Convention now available. In order to report the proceedings as accurately as possible, Madison sat facing the delegates with his back to Washington who presided. "In this favorable position," Madison wrote, "for hearing all that passed, I noted in terms legible and in abbreviations and marks intelligible to myself what was read from the Chair or spoken by the members; and losing not a moment . . . .I was enabled to write out my daily notes during the session or within a few finishing days after its close." Madison's notes were published by order of Congress, a few years after his death.

If one were pressed to single out one most important weakness in the study of civics in high schools, it would be the almost complete exclusion of <u>politics</u>. Somehow, and very mistakenly, it is assumed by almost all textbook writers and by many teachers that the study of politics does not belong to the study of government. In fact, it seems to us that the study of the Constitution, of government and of citizenship is almost meaningless without the teaching of the

political process. The Constitution, to take one example, enumerates the powers of the President and it prescribes the mode of his election, but it says nothing of the long process of nominating candidates for the Presidency, about the party conventions and the election campaigns. It should not be difficult to argue that the knowledge and an understanding of how we go about selecting a President is essential and indispensable to the understanding of the role and the functions of the Presidency.

The exclusion of politics from our civics classrooms is even more incomprehensible and inexcusable if one looks at it from a purely dydactic, methodological point of view. Politics as the art of the possible and the struggle of men for power is interesting and dramatic and would need little motivation. On the contrary, intelligent and effective infusion of political content would make the study of the Constitution and civics interesting and absorbing. Theodore White's books on the 1960 and 1964 Presidential elections became best-sellers, while many scholarly books on government can hardly sell a few thousand copies. Why? What is the secret of White's success? It is in the masterful way in which the author presents the fascinating and absorbing game of politics. Purdue University surveys of attitudes of high school students to political issues reveal that politicians are held in general contempt by our young people. For some reason, most students equate the politician with the image of a small corpulent political boss, smoking a big, fat cigar and trampling on the rights of the people. Theodore White, while not gilding the lily, emphasized a truism, which is somehow often overlooked, that without politicians our system of government could not function for a month. It is, or it should be, distressing to note that in almost all civics or government textbooks a student cannot find an

explanation of some of the most frequently used terms pertaining uniquely to American politics. As the Presidential elections approach, every four years, young people frequently encounter such typically American terms as "presidential timber," "dark-horse candidate," "favorite son," "smoke-filled room," "barn-storming campaign," "climbing on the bandwagon," and many others without ever being taught their meaning or significance. It is almost unbelievable, but a search of a great many of the most widely used civics textbooks showed that these and many other household expressions of our political life are not even mentioned.

Students in civics classes ought to become acquainted with some interesting bits of American political mythology. That mythology dictates that candidates must take a picture with their wives and children to assure the voters that all is well with their private home life. A candidate for office, in the midst of the campaign, who bone-wearily boards a plane at dawn for another parade and another speech, when asked by the reporters how he feels, must always say that he "never felt better in his life." It is somehow believed that if he told the truth that he is dead tired and thoroughly bored with repeating himself, the consequences would be disastrous. Similarly, no matter how cold and rainy the weather is, custom prescribes that he must ride in an open car in the parade, coatless and hatless. The purpose, it seems, is to prove to the people that he is a vigorous and hardy man who would have no trouble in carrying the burdens of the Presidency.

It is time to open to a free discussion and inquiry in high school class-rooms in some of the "closed areas" in the study of civics and government. We refer to the place of religious and ethnic factors in American politics. The

usual stance taken by curriculum writers, textbooks and many teachers, which either ignores or glosses over the place of ethnic origin and religion in elections, is indefensible on factual and pedagogic grounds. Religious and ethnic factors have a considerable influence on American elections and politics.

America has been a melting pot of many cultures and national groups and in time a general American consensus on political, social and cultural issues and mores has emerged. But, fortunately, the melting pot has not obliterated all cultural differences and the sense of ethnic loyalty. This fact does not testify to America's weakness, but to its strength. This powerful country is stronger, not weaker, because the Irish, wearing the green, march proudly in St. Patrick's Day parades, the Italians celebrate Columbus Day, and the Jews express their support for the State of Israel.

It may be reasonable to argue that the attempt to balance the tickets of candidates, if done with due regard to the qualifications for respective offices, is good for our national political health. The minority ethnic and religious groups apparently need an occasional reassurance that they enjoy first-class citizenship. Election to high offices of their compatriots has proven to be most effective in providing a feeling of belonging and of being important. It can be argued that attention to the "inheritances" of the ethnic groups is one of the more attractive traits of our democracy. There is something reassuring in regard to the vitality and viability of the democratic process to see candidates for the Presidency, for the Senate or for state governorship attentive and responsive to the concerns and the aspirations of the various voter blocs in the country. What better testimony can there be to the American principle of unity in diversity and to the paramount sovereignty of the voters? Due

attention to ethnic and religious influences in American politics can provide exciting teaching material. Students would undoubtedly enjoy inquiries into the 1928 Alfred Smith campaign for the Presidency and John Kennedy's election in 1960. Election results in some selected states could be analyzed and discussed with great profit.

The lessons devoted to the study of the constitutional provisions concerning the House of Representatives and the Senate would benefit greatly by the addition of the procedures and mores that have evolved in the functioning of the Congress through generations and of which no trace can be found in the text of the Constitution. Neither the Constitution nor most of the textbooks give the students a picture of how a Congressional Committee actually functions. When a hearing of a Committee of Congress is occasionally televised, very few of our young people (not to mention the older generation) realize how rigidly controlled the seating arrangements of the committee members are. Even those who know something of the seniority rule do not always realize how it works. Terms like "the ranking Democratic (or Republican) member" should not be an enigma for our students.

They should know that the seating of Senators and Congressmen at the meeting of Congressional Committees is strictly controlled by length of service. If the majority in Congress is Democratic, then the chairman who sits in the middle of the table is a Democrat. On his right sits the "ranking Democratic member" who is next in seniority (rank) to the chairman and who would almost automatically succeed him in case of death, resignation or defeat in the next election. The Democratic members sit on the right of the chairman according to their seniority, and the seat at the far end is occupied by the Senator who has most recently

been appointed to the Committee. He obviously has a long climb to the chairman's chair. On the left hand of the chairman sits "the ranking Republican member." If in the next election the Republicans should gain a majority in the Senate, the ranking Republican member would (if himself re-elected) become the chairman and the former chairman would then become the ranking minority member.

This system, although often widely criticized, has a great deal of merit. The chairmen of the powerful committee, who wield great power and responsibility, reach their positions after many years of service on the committee and thus gain valuable experience. The seniority rule, observed by both parties, provides in reality for alternate chairmen of important committees in Congress. Thus, continuity and orderly transfer of power is assured.

It is not enough to teach about the special powers of the Senate, to ratify treaties, to confirm major Presidential appointments. It is also important to provide the students with a more intimate picture of the most exclusive club in America. This club, which has only a hundred highly selected members, has its own rules and procedures. Much of the operation of the Senate and the way in which it exercises its enormous power can be understood only in terms of the many sanctified traditions which are cherished by all Senators.[3]

A newcomer to the Senate or a visitor in the Senate gallery is impressed by the courtesy and consideration with which Senators of both parties treat one

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[3]See Donald R. Mathhews, U. S. Senators and their World, University of North Carolina Press, (Chapel Hill, 1960) An excellent book on the U. S. Senate which contains a great deal of material easily adaptable to classroom use. Also, Lewis A. Froman, Congressmen and Their Constituents, Rand McNally, (Chicago, 1963).

another. This courtesy is one of the cardinal rules of the Club. A birthday or an anniversary of a veteran Senator is usually celebrated by laudatory speeches of members of both parties.

The freshman Senator, if he is to earn the respect of his colleagues, must also learn not to allow political disagreements to influence his personal relationships with all Senators. He must learn to address his colleagues as: "The distinguished (or able) Senator from _____" and he must never impugn their motives or criticize their states. He is told by his older colleagues that when he takes the floor for a speech he must expect a fellow Senator to rise and say: "Will the distinguished Senator from _____yield for a question (or a remark)," he should answer, "I yield to the learned (or able or distinguished) Senator from _____." Courtesy and consideration are important qualifications for membership in the Senatorial Club. A Senator must always remember that his enemies on one issue might be his friends on another. These rules of Senatorial courtesy and parliamentary procedure may seem hypocritical but they are very important. They permit the Senate, a highly competitive and individualistic and powerful body, to function with a great measure of effectiveness.

Obviously, the study of the Presidency in civics classes can not and should not be limited to the learning of the powers given to the President by the Constitution. Efforts must be made to present to the students, the Presidents, especially the outstanding ones, as interesting, colorful personalities. Students ought to be encouraged by presentation of suitable materials to form in their minds a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt, Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson. They would find the zest for life of T. R., the violent temper of Jackson, and the aloofness

and stubbornness of Wilson an interesting introduction to a more serious study of the various conceptions of the Presidency. There may be some benefit from a study of the correlation, or the lack of it, between the personality of the President and his narrow or broad interpretation of the powers of the Presidency.

There is indeed no reason why the study of civics cannot become an effective and even inspiring educational experience. What is needed is enthusiasm on the part of the teacher for the basic genius of the American government and politics and a willingness to use the available materials with imagination and skill.